

ATTEMPTED CHRISTMAS BOMBING SHOULD REFOCUS OBAMA'S PRIORITIES

By Congressman Jerry Moran

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Earlier this month, the White House released a report describing the security and intelligence gaps that led to a near-devastating attempt by an al-Qaeda inspired terrorist to detonate a bomb on Northwest Flight 253 on Christmas Day. If not for the explosive device failing to fully detonate and the actions of passengers aboard the plane, almost 300 people would have perished. Despite warnings from the bomber's father and knowledge of the threat, our intelligence agencies failed to stop the terrorist from boarding the plane.

We learn in high school government class that a fundamental purpose of government is to provide for the defense and safety of its citizens. The Christmas Day attack should be a wake-up call to President Obama that the federal government has serious work to do in upholding this basic responsibility to the American people.

While al-Qaeda continues to plot attacks on Americans at home and abroad, President Obama's energies have been elsewhere. He has spent his first year in office pursuing an agenda of health care reform, cap and trade, more bailouts and more spending. Rather than fixing our security vulnerabilities, the Obama Administration has been focused on growing the

size of government and putting government where it does not belong. With this new year upon us, I encourage President Obama to make it his resolution to get back to basics and make defeating terrorism and improving our country's security a top priority.

This latest terrorist attempt to kill Americans will not be the last. There are a number of actions our country should take to prevent the next attack: fix our faulty intelligence system to fully scrutinize and share information on individuals flagged by intelligence reports to determine who should be placed on the no-fly list or have visas revoked; do not try terrorist attackers in the U.S. court system where they receive unwarranted rights; and cease the transfer of Guantanamo detainees to countries that do not have the capacity to handle detainees and where some have been released only to rejoin al-Qaeda.

More than eight years after 9/11, due to the diligence of our law enforcement, intelligence, and security communities, we have foiled nearly 30 terrorist plots against the U.S. However, as made clear by the Christmas Day events, as well as the November Fort Hood shootings, more terrorist attacks can be expected, and serious and deadly weaknesses exist in the federal government's ability to protect American citizens from the next one. As the President's national security advisor said, "That's two strikes." I pray that our country never witnesses strike three.

In the days since the attack, the President has pledged to take action to keep citizens safe. Yet as Congress reconvenes and the White House and Democrat leaders turn their attention to finalizing a health care reform bill, I am concerned that other priorities will take hold. Americans deserve more than business as usual from Washington's leaders.

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